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ABSTRACT

In fall 1999, the Provost of the State University of New York (SUNY) established the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and charged it with examining and discussing the issues involved in implementing undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment in the context of the large and diverse university system and making recommendations for assessing student outcomes and intellectual growth in General Education and the major subject. This report discusses the principles underlying sound assessment developed by the American Association of Higher Education and the SUNY principles of good practice. Recommendations are provided for campus-wide assessment and the use and reporting of assessment results. Assessment practices are also outlined for the major. The Task Force recommendations for actualizing the SUNY Assessment Initiative are outlined. Seven appendixes provide background information about the development of the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. (SLD)

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# STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

## REPORT

## OF THE

## PROVOST'S ADVISORY TASK FORCE ON THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

**November 28, 2000**

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## INTRODUCTION

In addition to its fundamental mission to create and disseminate knowledge, a university's major value to society is demonstrated through the quality of the education that it provides its students.

The State University of New York has a strong tradition of offering academic programs of the highest quality. At a time when the State University is working to assert a stronger, more prominent position in American higher education, its priorities must be to maintain this level of distinction and continuously improve the quality of undergraduate education across the University. We have a responsibility to our students, to the State of New York, and to all constituencies of the University to set standards of excellence that meet and exceed those of our national peers.

We can best reach this objective through a vigorous assessment of our academic programs, both in General Education and the Major, with a particular focus on the student learning outcomes those programs are producing. Such a strategy is in keeping with the nationwide discussion regarding the value of assessment in improving teaching and learning. This strategy is also responsive to the prevalent themes of accrediting bodies, the public's demand for accountability in colleges and universities, and the heightened scrutiny of institutional effectiveness by public officials and state agencies.

A review of the history of assessment in SUNY reveals that, at one time, the State University was positioned to become a national leader in the assessment movement. By the mid-1990's, however, University-wide interest in and commitment to assessment had waned, though a number of individuals, programs, and campuses continued to build upon these promising foundations. Now, we face the need to rededicate ourselves to an endeavor most observers of higher education agree is a critical activity: The demonstration that our students are indeed learning what we are teaching.

It is time for the largest university system in the nation to regain momentum and re-establish itself as a leader in the assessment movement. While this task is daunting, there are reasons to believe it is achievable. First, many individual institutions within the University have made impressive strides in assessing learning outcomes and we can benefit from their example and expertise. Second, numerous peer institutions across the country have effectively implemented assessment programs for General Education and the Major, meaning that we do not have to entirely "reinvent the wheel." Third, we have the advantage of work done by the Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education (with its recommendations regarding the delineation of student learning outcomes) and the extant implementations of campus assessment across the University, which serve as an invaluable foundation for establishing a strong assessment program. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, SUNY-wide governance bodies have long participated in the University's assessment efforts, participation that continues with the present report. Given the fundamental, demonstrated importance of faculty to successful learning outcomes assessment, the ongoing support of the SUNY Faculty Senate and the SUNY Faculty Council of Community Colleges bodes well for the implementation of an effective program across the University.

### *Provost's Charge*

In Fall 1999, the Provost established the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes as a broadly representative committee comprised of faculty, administration, staff, and students from across the University, and charged it with the responsibility to:

- Examine and discuss the issues involved in implementing undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment today—specifically, in the context of a large and diverse university system such as the State University of New York,

and to make recommendations regarding:

- A process for assessing student learning outcomes and intellectual growth in General Education and the Major that will provide the faculty and academic leadership with an important and effective way of improving the quality of undergraduate education, and the University with a coherent and meaningful longitudinal database with which to be accountable to its stakeholders.

***Assessment's Dual Functions: Improvement and Accountability***

Assessment serves two critical, complementary functions in higher education today: Improvement and accountability. "Assessment as improvement" serves purposes that are primarily (but not entirely) internal to an individual college or university. It is likely to result in more rapid improvements in student learning and, therefore, to appeal to longstanding faculty concerns and goals. "Assessment as accountability" serves purposes that are primarily (but not entirely) external to institutions and, as such, is likely to be of more interest to outside constituents. Historically, faculty resistance to assessment has focused primarily on this function of assessment, with faculty viewing such practices as intrusive and even a threat to academic freedom.

- ▶ The Task Force believes that both "Assessment as improvement" and "Assessment as accountability" have an appropriate place in the SUNY Assessment Initiative and can produce results that strengthen the University's institutions and the system as a whole, while demonstrating its effectiveness in achieving positive student learning outcomes.

*Assessment as Improvement*

The SUNY Assessment Initiative places foremost emphasis on assessment as a means of improving student learning. This initiative assumes that, by engaging in sound assessment of student learning outcomes, we can show that we continue to provide the opportunity for students to build the intellectual foundation they will need for a full, productive life. Specifically, in General Education we can show that students are acquiring a knowledge base of sufficient depth and breadth in core academic skills and competencies. In the Major we can demonstrate they are fully prepared to meet the standards for advanced study, the qualifications of professional careers, and the needs of contemporary society.

Key examples of how assessment can improve the University and its constituent colleges and universities are detailed immediately below.

<u>Programs and Institutions</u>

The most compelling reason to engage in meaningful assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning and, ultimately, academic programs and institutions. Simply stated, outcomes assessment is based upon the belief that improvement in practices is a healthy aspect of institutional life. A number of colleges and universities across the nation have acted systematically on this belief and, in the process, enhanced their programs, student learning outcomes, and their academic reputation. These institutions include Ohio University, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Virginia Tech (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Such enhancement is perhaps best exemplified by Truman State University (formerly Northeast Missouri State University), which has transformed itself to become Missouri's "selective, statewide public liberal arts and sciences university" through a commitment to outcomes assessment (Magruder, McManis, & Young, 1997).

It is clear that successful assessment programs frequently lead to positive developments in both curricular programs and institutions (El-Khawas, 1995). At Ball State University, the institution's

five-year cycle of General Education assessment led to substantial programmatic changes, including course redesign as well as the removal of courses from the program (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Similarly, SUNY Fredonia's comprehensive outcomes assessment of its General Education program stimulated the development of a number of new cross-cultural curricular initiatives (Academic Assessment Report & Plans, 1990-91).

Still, as Hutchings and Marchese (1990) conclude, "the possibility of proving a cause-and-effect relationship between assessment and improved learning is likely to remain elusive" (p. 35). According to Palomba and Banta (1999), this elusiveness results from a number of factors. First, in many cases the impact of assessment is subtle and felt only over time. Second, rarely is assessment information the only factor that contributes to the introduction of changes in programs. Third, changes made in academic programs based on assessment data are often minor and should therefore not be expected to produce large changes in measured outcomes. Despite these problems, dramatic improvements in student learning have been documented as a result of assessment at institutions such as Oakton Community College and Spartanburg Technical College (Palomba & Banta, 1999). More important, there are numerous benefits resulting from assessment activity in addition to its impact on student learning. As Palomba and Banta conclude, "Much of the value of assessment comes from the systematic way it makes educators question, discuss, share, and observe. As a result, assessment contributes greatly to the understanding of what educators do and to the choices they make about future directions for their work" (1999, pp. 328-9).

## Faculty Development and Community-Building

Pat Belanoff, Director of Writing Programs at the University at Stony Brook (1994), observed:

> "Assessment works best when faculty can see that it does not invade their classrooms but grows out of them, when faculty can accept the goals of their own teaching and the goals of assessment as both compatible and mutually reinforcing, when faculty feel valued and valuable because the tests reflect their own input into the whole teaching, learning, and assessment process" (Faculty Perspectives: Sharing Ideas on Assessment, 1994).

Although the point is often overlooked, assessment of student outcomes is in the best interests of faculty, who have a great stake in knowing whether or not their teaching efforts are effective in promoting student learning. There is also a growing literature on the advantages of the assessment process in facilitating communication among faculty and providing them an opportunity to collaborate regarding the intended outcomes of their curricular programs (Palomba & Banta, 1999). To illustrate, Rust (1997) found that faculty who were participating in the development of an assessment program commented on the benefits of getting faculty "to talk to one another." Similarly, Hill (1996) reported that faculty who participated in discussions about program expectations, goals, and objectives found the process highly rewarding. These examples suggest that the assessment process provides the basis for meaningful dialogue among faculty members regarding their programs and how to best bring about improvements in student learning.

## Advocacy on Behalf of Institutions

Observers of higher education have noted that institutions with strong assessment programs should be in a position to translate that asset into additional fiscal resources. Indeed, a number of colleges and universities—including Ohio University, Truman State University, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville—have reported success using assessment results to make a case for increased funding from their respective states (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Similarly, Ohio University received academic

challenge and program excellence awards from the Ohio Board of Regents based on assessment information (Williford & Moden, 1993).

*Assessment as Accountability*

Assessment also serves a clear accountability function and, as a publicly supported institution, the State University of New York has a responsibility to demonstrate to its various stakeholders that it achieves the purposes for which it was created. In a multi-campus system there are multiple levels of accountability:

- Of the University to the Board of Trustees, College Council members and the Boards of Trustees of Community Colleges, executive and legislative officials, and the public; and
- Of individual campuses to their students and their parents, employers and the communities served by campuses, and accrediting and regulatory bodies.

Accountability Within the University

While the missions of the constituent campuses of the University vary widely, there is a common expectation that all institutions will enable students to achieve learning outcomes appropriate in content, breadth, depth, and rigor to the students' academic program and the institutional mission. Other worthy outcomes, such as research productivity, workforce development, or community service, may be central to some campuses in the University but not to all.

Therefore, constituent institutions of the University are rightly held accountable for the learning outcomes achieved by their students and for a variety of other aspects of institutional effectiveness that contribute in their own way to learning outcomes, including, for example, student satisfaction with the quality of services and administrative support.

► The Task Force believes that the University fulfills its expectation of accountability when it assures that its constituent campuses systematically assess learning and other outcomes, communicate findings to appropriate internal and external stakeholders, and use findings to improve educational practice.

► The Task Force also believes that SUNY System Administration is accountable to its constituent campuses in the implementation of a successful student learning outcomes assessment program. Such accountability is manifested primarily in two ways:

- Through System Administration's willingness to invest itself in the process, to commit personnel to oversee and coordinate the process, and to provide adequate resources so that campuses are able to introduce new, effective modes of assessment.[1]
- Through the provision of databases that are reliable, coordinated, and available to appropriate persons, since valid, accessible information is the basis of sound assessment.

[1] Other important aspects of System Administration support should include a) maintaining a database of people—both within SUNY and from the broader community— who are available and willing to act as assessment resources; b) maintaining an up-to-date website showing the latest national conferences on assessment, as well as other important links; c) support for professional development; d) support for organizing SUNY-wide conferences and coordinated guest lectures; and e) establishing a working group within System Administration responsible for these and other assessment issues.

## Accountability Outside the University

Increasingly, accrediting agencies, public officials and state governments, and the public are calling for academic program assessment as a demonstration of accountability. At present, all six accrediting bodies in the United States require collection and use of assessment data for program improvement, including the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, SUNY's accrediting agency (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

As of 1996, more than three quarters of the states required information from colleges and universities regarding student outcomes or institutional performance (Ewell, 1996). Such trends led Dr. Minna Weinstein, Senior Executive Director of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, to conclude in Summer 1999 that the "alternative of federal and state responsibility for quality assurance rather than peer and institutional driven processes of evaluation has been an intimidating prospect" (Weinstein, 1999). In New York, the State Education Department (SED) is in the process of drafting a Quality Assurance Initiative that will require that each degree-granting institution:

- Engage in comprehensive, institution-wide planning for improving student learning and institutional effectiveness and . . . implement a quality assurance process to ensure achievement of those goals; and
- Make regular, public disclosures about its mission and its performance.

► The Task Force believes that, if the State University is to enjoy the confidence of elected and legislative officials and the public they serve, and thereby garner the financial support that it needs, it must demonstrate that the education it offers produces educated and skilled graduates.

*Summary*

Institutions of higher learning have multiple reasons to engage in assessment activity, as a means of continuously improving the quality of academic programs and as a way of being responsive to a range of external expectations. As Farmer (1988) has written, "Assessment should not be seen as 'medicine' for holding higher education accountable. Assessment should be seen in a more positive way for the promise it holds for improving both the quality and quantity of learning taking place for students."

Notably, although the relationship between assessment as improvement and as accountability may always be "rich and strange" (Ewell, 1997), there is increasing recognition that these dual functions may co-exist and even serve each other. In a recent article published in *Academe: Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Jean Avnet Morse,[2] Executive Director of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Higher Education, writes:

> " . . . outcomes assessment means more than accountability and the reporting of statistics. It enables institutions to focus their goals and improve their teaching and learning. Institutions that rely on it determine the knowledge and skills that students should learn; identify the personal attributes that students should acquire and develop; consider what methods and instruments will be used for measuring student achievement; collect and analyze the assessment data; develop a comprehensive system for communicating them; and, finally, decide how that information will be used to improve teaching and learning (Morse & Santiago, 2000).

Morse and Santiago also emphasize the importance of the faculty's role in assessment activity, saying "faculty members are the heart of the process of outcomes assessment," since it is they—within the framework of an institution's educational mission and goals—who are responsible for creating and

[2] Co-written with George Santiago.

developing programs and curricula, doing the research and designing assessment programs, and framing and leading the assessment process.

The arguments made by Morse and Santiago for linking accreditation and outcomes assessment to positive institutional change represent a welcome addition to the assessment literature in higher education, which has tended to dichotomize assessment's improvement and accountability functions. It is significant that this article has been published by the AAUP, which has traditionally and staunchly supported the concept of academic freedom in colleges and universities.

- The Task Force asserts unequivocally that, while acknowledging the legitimacy of the expectation that SUNY must be publicly accountable, the continuous improvement of teaching and learning remains the most important objective of the SUNY Assessment Initiative.

- The Task Force endorses the recent "blending" of viewpoints on assessment – "Assessment as improvement" and "Assessment as accountability"—and has attempted to incorporate both viewpoints in its own efforts.

    - Campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major should be rigorous and comprehensive, and the process itself accountable to peers, a tradition that is one of the hallmarks of effective governance.
    - University-wide assessment of General Education should serve to provide an important degree of accountability, reflecting the system as a whole, rather than any one campus.

## PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING SOUND ASSESSMENT

***9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE)***

Outcomes assessment is surely a partnership endeavor involving the faculty of the University and the academic leadership of the campuses and System Administration. As the largest university system in the nation we should be especially motivated to embrace strategies and processes that exemplify the best practices in American higher education, for our actions will be closely watched. To be more specific, it should be our goal to structure SUNY's assessment process so that it surpasses anything that has yet been done in the nation.

Our success in achieving this objective depends greatly on our ability to identify and establish principles that underlie the best uses of assessment and assessment data. In addition to being based on the best assessment practices in colleges and universities across the nation, these principles must also reflect the mission and values of the State University itself. In its deliberations and in making its recommendations, the Task Force has adhered to the *9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning* put forward by the American Association of Higher Education Assessment Forum:

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only *what* we choose to assess but also *how* we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations—those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way—about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation—to ourselves, our students, and society—is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

***Supplementary Principles of Good Practice (SUNY)***

In addition, the Task Force has been guided by the following principles that seem particularly suitable to the State University:

*Goals and Process*

10. **The primary objective of the SUNY assessment initiative is the improvement of academic programs that are responsible for promoting student learning and intellectual growth.** In addition to program improvement, assessment should attempt to determine how students change as a result of their academic experiences and how institutions "make a difference" in students' intellectual growth and skill development.

11. **This assessment initiative must respect the diversity that exists among SUNY institutions, especially their unique missions and their varied implementations of the SUNY General Education Requirement.** As stated in the *Implementation Guidelines*, effort must be made to allow campuses the flexibility to assess their programs "in accord with their own unique characteristics." Allowing each campus to develop its own unique assessment plan ensures that these plans are consistent with individual campus goals and objectives.

12. **Good assessment practice for SUNY will require continuous communication between individual campuses and System Administration.** This should include an ongoing dialogue regarding assessment activities and findings, and a periodic evaluation of the assessment process itself. Such review will enable individual campuses and System Administration to determine if the process is producing the kind of information that can lead to improvements in student learning and that improvements in programs are being made on the basis of assessment results.

The University Faculty Senate was especially influential in the development of the following principle, taken from a resolution passed unanimously by that body on April 29, 2000:

13. **Any approach to the assessment of undergraduate education for the State University of New York, the largest and most diverse system of higher education in the world, must be comprehensive, comprehensible, complex, cost effective, collegial, constructive, and primarily campus-based.**

    - Comprehensive. Campus plans should assess institutional and student performance in the following areas of undergraduate education: communication and computation, general education, academic majors, and student social and personal development.
    - Comprehensible. Campus plans and assessment reports should be clear and comprehensible to internal and external constituents and publics. Annual assessment reports should indicate the current level of institutional and student performance in the areas outlined in above as compared with the levels recorded in previous reports.
    - Complex. The plans should use multiple approaches to assessment and multiple indicators of effectiveness that reflect the complexity of the goals of higher education and the diversity of SUNY campuses.
    - Cost Effective. The plans should be cost effective and use, where appropriate, existing databases and evaluation processes and sampling techniques.
    - Collegial. Campus plans should incorporate active faculty and student participation in the development and implementation of assessment programs.

- Constructive. Assessment should be used not to compare or grade campuses or students but to demonstrate current levels of achievement and to improve future performance. The appropriate comparison is not with other institutions but with campus past performance. The goal of assessment for students and institutions is to help them become the best they are capable of being.
- Campus-based. Development and implementation of assessment plans that suit the needs of each of the State-operated/funded campuses and SUNY community colleges require that assessment be primarily campus-based. Comprehensive assessment of General Education and the Major should be conducted by the campuses and include, but not be limited to, those other review activities associated with general and specialized accreditation, such as those conducted by Middle States, SED and professional area accrediting bodies.

A copy of the University Faculty Senate's resolution in its entirety is included in Appendix A.

*Faculty and Student Involvement*

14. **Good assessment practice requires that faculty are an integral part of the process. This results** from a process in which assessment is approached as an opportunity for collaborative goal-setting for academic programs. Indeed, assessment can only be accomplished if there is agreement at the outset on program goals and if assessment is connected to questions and issues that SUNY faculty and professional staff care about.

15. **Good assessment practice requires that students are an integral part of the process.** Inasmuch as program improvement ultimately benefits students, campuses should educate students regarding the importance of assessment and involve them in the development of campus and program assessment plans. Campuses should also use creative ways of encouraging SUNY students to be motivated to perform to the best of their abilities on assessment measures.

*Resources and the Relationship to Performance Funding*

16. **The adoption of a sound assessment program for SUNY depends upon institutional and System Administration commitment and support, and will require the allocation of new resources for both campus-based and University-wide assessment.** A paramount responsibility for System Administration is to work assiduously with the campuses and the Trustees to guarantee that assessment efforts at the campus level receive generous resources, staff assistance, and funding on a sustained basis.[3]

    - Individual campuses cannot be expected to implement comprehensive and effective campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major without new funding set aside for that purpose. For State-operated and funded institutions, this might possibly be done through Performance Funding, based upon a determination of the extent to which campuses have implemented their assessment plans for General Education and the Major;[4] for community colleges, an alternative funding process will need to be established.
    - Additional Performance Funding could be made available for outstanding campus-based assessment initiatives and demonstrated positive changes in students' performance on

[3] It is the Task Force's understanding that few or no resources were allocated in support of the earlier SUNY assessment initiative in the late 1980's and early 1990's. A number of Task Force members who were with SUNY at that time have expressed the view that this may have been one of the significant reasons for that initiative's failure.

[4] Made, in part, by the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group in the "process review" (see *Role of University Faculty in Evaluating Campus-based Assessment Plans*). For example, campus plans could be determined to be "fully" or "partially implemented," or "in the planning stage."

assessments for General Education and the Major. Further, additional Performance Funding could possibly be provided at a later point in time, once the University has established valid measures that are capable of fully capturing the value added by all institutions, including community colleges.

- System Administration will also need to secure resources to cover the costs associated with University-wide assessment of General Education, especially for developing appropriate assessment instruments and evaluation rubrics, as well as for the grading or scoring of student responses.

An estimate of required resources is given in Appendix B.

17. **Performance funding should not be linked to the absolute level of the results of campus-based or University-wide assessment, or to direct comparisons among campuses.** Only under such conditions can a climate of trust—critical to the implementation of meaningful, valid assessment—be established and maintained.

## General Education

### *The Role of Campus-based and University-wide Assessment of General Education*

The Task Force believes that both campus-based and University-wide assessment of General Education have important, complementary roles to play in the SUNY Assessment Initiative.

Reflecting the dual functions of assessment described earlier, campus-based assessment will enable institutions to improve their programs, instructional practices, and student learning while University-wide assessment will be utilized primarily to demonstrate accountability to the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees, legislative and executive officials, and the public. Of course, this distinction is far from absolute. Certainly individual institutions can use data derived from their own campus-based assessment efforts for accountability purposes as they see fit. For instance, a campus may choose to report assessment data to the Middle States Association as support for the quality of its General Education program. Likewise, University-wide assessment may yield information that feeds back into the teaching and learning process. To illustrate, if three campuses are utilizing distinct pedagogical approaches to achieve a particular General Education learning outcome, the analysis of systematic assessment over time could provide insight regarding the relative effectiveness of those approaches.

As detailed below, neither the campus-based or University-wide methodologies recommended for assessing General Education learning outcomes involve "high-stakes" testing of students. While some states have adopted this strategy, the Task Force asserts that "competency," "rising junior," or "exit" tests are inappropriate, in that they provide little insight into the improvement of teaching and learning and, experience shows, generally lead to lower (minimum) standards. The SUNY Assessment Initiative aims to raise standards through using feedback from assessment to improve programs, as well as identifying best practices that can be shared throughout the University community. This process is complex, and therefore should be based on information far more comprehensive than simple test results.

Once implemented, the SUNY Assessment Initiative will eventually yield two distinct sets of assessment data on our students' achievement of General Education learning outcomes. It is important to recognize that the information produced through campus-based assessment activities and the information resulting from a University-wide, sampling-based, assessment procedure are very different.

An analogous situation that exists in health care assessment may illuminate this difference. Individual hospitals routinely collect and report data on health outcomes of surgical patients who have varying diagnoses and courses of treatment. These hospital-based treatment outcomes can be used to ensure that each hospital in the state is meeting mandates to track and assess treatment outcomes.

At the same time, if one wanted to know about how New Yorkers' health compares to individuals in other states or how it has changed since 1950, different, population-based information would be utilized. Examples of such data, which are commonly derived from population-based sample surveys, would include variables such as rates of teen pregnancy, infant mortality, cigarette smoking, drug use, and obesity.

These two data sets—the hospital-based and the population-based—are derived from two very different approaches to evaluating the health of New Yorkers, and may at times lead to divergent conclusions. For instance, even if New York hospitals have the best post-surgery outcomes imaginable, it does not necessarily mean that New Yorkers' health is improving. In this sense, one data set does not serve as a check or verification for the other. Rather, the data sets are providing different perspectives on the phenomenon under study. In different years they may correspond, they may complement each other, or

they may not seem to relate to each other at all. As such, great care should be taken in interpreting and comparing them, especially when they seem to be telling different stories.

The conceptualization of campus-based assessment focusing on program improvement and University-wide assessment serving accountability and advocacy functions is especially appropriate at the onset of the SUNY Assessment Initiative, since assessment data derived from campus efforts can be fed back into the teaching and learning process relatively quickly.

***Campus-based Assessment***

*Role of Faculty*

Each campus is responsible for determining the particular structure and content of its campus-based General Education assessment plan, following existing governance processes.

► The Task Force recommends that these assessment plans adhere to the following format:

- Delineation of the General Education program's goals and objectives, including the learning outcomes outlined in the *Implementation Guidelines*;
- Description of the programmatic activities that are intended to accomplish the campus's goals and objectives for its General Education curriculum;
- Identification of the assessment criteria to be utilized in determining whether or not students are meeting the campus's curricular goals and objectives; and
- Description of the process to be used in assessing the campus's General Education plan, making changes, if suggested, based on assessment findings, and disseminating assessment results to the campus community.

The actual task of developing and implementing a campus-based assessment plan for General Education should fall primarily to the faculty members who teach in the program, with the assistance of professional staff and students when appropriate. It may be necessary, however, for governance bodies or offices that provide administrative support to a campus's General Education program to lead and coordinate these assessment efforts. Depending on the campus, it may make sense to utilize faculty who do not teach General Education classes in these efforts. Campus-based assessment plans should be submitted to, and approved by, the campus's Faculty Senate or Faculty Council.

*Reporting Format*

Individual campuses should have autonomy in determining how to disseminate the results of their campus-based General Education assessment program to their own communities. Such dissemination should take place in some fashion, however, since knowledge of assessment findings is a prerequisite for making programmatic changes. A campus's General Education assessment plan should therefore include information regarding the dissemination process.

► The Task Force recommends that, in reporting the results of their General Education assessment program to System Administration, campuses use a standardized format to be jointly developed by the campuses and System Administration. The report should provide information on:

- The assessment criteria used to determine whether students are meeting the program's goals and objectives;

- The sampling procedures used to choose students who provided data for the assessment as well as a description of the sample itself;
- A detailed summary of the results of the assessment, including the learning outcomes outlined in the *Implementation Guidelines*; and
- A discussion of programmatic changes to be considered for possible implementation as a result of the assessment findings.

At a minimum, the reported results should indicate the percentage of students exceeding, meeting, approaching, and not meeting the delineated learning outcomes.

*Role of University Faculty in Evaluating Campus-based Assessment Plans*

As described earlier, an individual campus's General Education assessment plan should be approved by that campus's Faculty Senate or Faculty Council prior to undergoing initial and ongoing review by a group of University faculty, campus chief academic officers, representatives from System Administration, and students. This General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group should be formed jointly by University Faculty Senate and Community College Faculty Council leadership and System Administration, making every effort to include individuals who are knowledgeable about assessment.

► The Task Force recommends that the GEAR group, in its "process review" of campus General Education assessment plans, should focus exclusively on the campus's assessment processes and procedures, not the assessment outcomes themselves.

Initial approval process

The GEAR group should initially review campus plans to ensure they are comprehensive and rigorous. A fundamental evaluative criterion should be the extent to which campuses demonstrate the correlation between their General Education assessment plan and the *Implementation Guidelines*. Other criteria should include:

- Clearly-stated goals and objectives for the plan, including for the assessment of the learning outcomes delineated in the *Implementation Guidelines*;
- The courses and activities that relate to, and are likely to result in, the achievement of the campus's programmatic goals and objectives;
- Assessment measures and criteria to be utilized in determining the degree to which students are achieving the campus's programmatic goals and objectives; and
- Campus procedures that exist for revising its General Education plan, should that be suggested by assessment results.

Ongoing review

Following the initial process review, campuses' General Education assessment programs should be reviewed on a biennial, staggered basis—with some reviews taking place every year so as to distribute the administrative burden across time. In conducting these reviews, the GEAR group should apply the criteria utilized in the initial process review, with an emphasis on the extent to which campuses demonstrate they are using assessment results to improve their General Education programs.

For all reviews conducted by the GEAR group, the group's assessment of the quality of campus General Education assessment plans and their implementation should be provided simultaneously to the campus and to System Administration.

Campuses shall provide an annual report of their assessment findings to System Administration, including specific information on their students' progress in mastering the learning outcomes outlined in the *Implementation Guidelines*. System Administration will use these data—in accord with the Utilization and Reporting of Assessment Results principles below—in the preparation of summary reports to external stakeholders for accountability purposes. The Chief Academic Officer at each campus will submit this report directly to the Office of the Provost at System Administration.

***University-wide Assessment***

SUNY University-wide assessment is governed by the assumption that academic assessment is primarily a campus-based responsibility of the faculty as they conduct the educational programs of their institutions and participate significantly in the initiation, development and implementation of those educational programs. Although campus-based assessment should be the focus of the SUNY Assessment Initiative, the Task Force believes that there is an appropriate place for University-wide assessment as well. Information derived from University-wide assessment will be used primarily by System Administration for accountability purposes—enabling it to report on the status of General Education outcomes in SUNY as a whole—and to advocate on behalf of the University.

*Role of University Faculty*

It is a cornerstone assumption of the Task Force that University faculty are responsible for determining the structure and content of University-wide General Education assessment.

- The Task Force recommends that a group of faculty be formed from across SUNY (including representatives from the appropriate governance bodies) who would work collaboratively with representatives from System Administration to develop the actual assessment instrument(s) to be used, as well as the procedures to be followed. Representatives from the SUNY Learning Network should also be invited to participate, and it is likely that external consultants will be needed as well to help develop these instruments. It is also recommended that there be some cross-membership between this group, the GEAR group, and other groups with related responsibilities.
- Faculty and System Administration representatives working on University-wide assessment would be well-advised to study various campus-based approaches to assessing General Education and identify "best practices" from among these approaches, since the basis for University-wide assessment may well evolve from these campus-based assessments.

*Scope and Methodologies*

In framing its guidelines for University-wide assessment, the Task Force has been guided by the following assumption:

- University-wide assessment of the Trustees' General Education requirement flows directly from the *Implementation Guidelines* of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education, and should be based on the specified *Knowledge and Skills Areas* and *Competencies* learning outcomes, although in some cases elaboration and/or clarification of these outcomes may be required.

► The Task Force believes the following guidelines will assure the academic appropriateness, standards, and validity of University-wide General Education assessment:

- University-wide assessment is not intended to test all SUNY students in all General Education disciplines every year. Rather, it aims to periodically[5] assess, using common measures, a representative sample of students from across the SUNY system in order to gauge, as effectively as is practical, students' attainment in those General Education learning outcomes outlined in the *Implementation Guidelines* that lend themselves to this form of assessment. An appropriate and effective assessment would include measures of some of the *Knowledge and Skills* outcomes as well as the *Critical Thinking and Information Management* competencies.
- A variety of approaches may be utilized in University-wide assessment, although there is a need to ensure that assessment procedures are practicable and uniform. In that regard, it would be acceptable to include a random subset of measures across different assessment cycles, as long as there is uniformity in the process across campus units at any one assessment time.
- University-wide assessment should utilize appropriate random sampling techniques in the selection of students who take part in the assessment effort, with clear guidelines in place describing the extent to which campuses will be involved in the sampling process and this involvement standardized across campuses.
- University-wide assessment should include in its student sample only those students who have completed the General Education requirements in the academic domain being assessed and who took the relevant courses at the campus where the assessment is being conducted.
- Valid and reliable learning outcomes measures must be utilized in any University-wide assessment.

There are important reasons why University-wide assessment should not attempt to address all the learning outcomes of the *Knowledge and Skills Areas*, especially those based on content areas that are implemented in very diverse ways across the University. These include: Other World Civilizations; Humanities; The Arts; and Foreign Language. Outcomes for these areas are best evaluated and tracked longitudinally through campus-based assessment.

In addition, some *Knowledge and Skills Areas* require students to master learning outcomes in a discipline: It is not possible to assess these learning outcomes using discipline-specific concepts and content in an environment where there are many, diverse implementations. It should, however, be possible to evaluate students' knowledge of general approaches and methodologies in some areas.

► The Task Force recommends that University-wide assessment should target those domains that are embedded across the curriculum and can reasonably be considered important "vectors"[6] of development, referring to those aspects of intellectual growth that both define where students have come from intellectually and where they are headed, and that provide the foundation for further development. According to this definition, the following outcomes seem to be amenable to University-wide assessment:

[5] A biennial process should be considered.
[6] Attributed to Chickering (1969).

Knowledge and Skills Areas

*Mathematics*

- Arithmetic
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Data analysis
- Quantitative reasoning

*Natural Sciences*

- Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis

*Social Sciences*

- Understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis

*Basic Communication*

- Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms
- Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts

Competencies

*Critical Thinking (Reasoning)*

- Identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or other's work
- Develop well-reasoned arguments

*Information Management*

- Perform the basic operations of personal computer use
- Understand and use basic research techniques
- Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources

The decision to focus on such developmental vectors in University-wide assessment is consistent with the methodology used in other states, which have tended not to measure specific content areas or competencies. It should also be possible to combine some skill and knowledge outcomes through this approach: For example, "quantitative reasoning" could include mathematics and information management, while "critical thinking" could include the application of the scientific method as used in the natural and social sciences.

*Student Motivation to Participate*

Students must feel motivated to do their best in University-wide assessment of General Education if valid assessment results are to be achieved. In colleges and universities across the country where assessment has become a part of the institutional culture (e.g., Truman State University, Ball State University), students expect to play a role in assessment and even value it. These institutions have cultivated student interest by making the assessment process itself engaging, showing that everyone—including faculty—take assessment seriously and, in most cases, providing students with feedback and recognition regarding their individual performance.

SUNY students can rise to the challenge of assessment and positive change. As graduates-to-be, they have a vested interest in strengthening SUNY's reputation for academic excellence. SUNY students want to be a part of a process that is intended to improve the University. They need to know that the SUNY community cares about them, and they should be made to feel special and appreciated for their part in the improvement of learning. They recognize that this initiative is not intended to be a test of individual students: It is an assessment of us all as a whole, as a University. And they want to know the results, what we have learned from them, and what improvements will be made.

Developing an "assessment culture," however, takes considerable time and requires that students receive consistent messages from faculty, professional staff, and administrators regarding the importance of assessment on a particular campus. By following the recommendations included in this report, the University and its constituent campuses will take a critical first step in developing an assessment culture University-wide and that, eventually, student motivation will become less of an issue. Steps will need to be taken in the interim, however, to ensure that student motivation is maximized.

During its deliberations, the Task Force identified three strategies for approaching this problem:

- Make University-wide assessment completely course-embedded—i.e., using measures that are already incorporated into curricula and courses—with only a representative sample of student responses sent on for University-wide analysis and use. This would effectively eliminate the problem of motivation;
- Conduct University-wide assessment outside the context of the classroom and encourage student participation through meaningful incentives (e.g., students could receive a special notation on their transcript based on their participation in the University-wide General Education assessment); and
- Limit the burden on students through combining some of the learning outcomes measures [e.g., *Basic Communication* and *Critical Thinking (Reasoning)* or through creating a cycle of assessment whereby, for example, only a third of the learning outcomes is assessed on a third of the campuses each year.

Each of these strategies has its strengths and weaknesses and they should all be examined carefully before the best way of solving the student motivation problem is determined. In addition, it may be possible to combine these strategies, since one may be more appropriate for a particular learning outcome than another.

▶ The Task Force recommends that individual campuses include in their catalogs and student handbooks a statement explaining the SUNY Assessment Initiative—with an emphasis on how assessment leads to program and campus improvement—and that campus leadership publicly support the Initiative.

*Implementation Process*

As a follow-up to the work of this Task Force, a University-wide Assessment Implementation Working Group will need to be formed and charged to:

- Identify the most effective way of measuring the learning outcomes identified above;
- Establish criteria for the learning outcomes so as to provide college-level standards for this assessment; and,
- Make recommendations regarding the details that will arise (e.g., sampling, motivation) in the administration of the measures described above.

The Task Force trusts that System Administration will follow assessment results over time, in accord with the guidelines described below, and organize findings in ways that can ultimately be used to inform faculty regarding apparent best instructional practices for the General Education learning outcomes. In this way, University-wide assessment can have a positive impact on pedagogy.

► The Task Force believes strongly that implementation of University-wide assessment should not proceed on its own ahead of the implementation of comprehensive campus-based assessment. (A recommended implementation schedule is given in Appendix C.)

Assuming that the process for annual campus-based General Education assessment proceeds with precision and integrity and that University-wide assessment is designed by University faculty to complement campus-based plans, the State University of New York will have a model in place unlike any other in the nation, characterized by a remarkable degree of campus and faculty autonomy, an acceptable degree of commonality, and a high level of public accountability.

***Utilization and Reporting of Assessment Results***

Assessment is not evaluation, nor is it competition. Assessment is a process, first and foremost, for understanding and improving student learning. To ensure that assessment results are used appropriately, System Administration will be primarily responsible for organizing, utilizing, and presenting information derived from the SUNY Assessment Initiative in the manner suggested in the following set of seven principles:

- **Stringent guidelines must be developed and adhered to in order to ensure that confidentiality of assessment data is maintained.** A true "culture of assessment" requires that assessment results—for campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major, and for University-wide assessment—be shared only with appropriate stakeholders.

- **Data yielded by assessment activities should be used primarily to maintain and strengthen academic programs so as to achieve stated goals for student learning.** While campuses may use assessment results to engage in self-promotion, they must remain collegial and should not use these data as a means of comparing themselves in ways that would tend to diminish other institutions.

- **Assessment results should never be used to punish, publicly compare, or embarrass students, faculty, courses, programs, departments, or institutions either individually or collectively.**

- **Assessment results should never be used to make public comparisons among groups of students based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other demographic factors.** A basic value of the State University is that all students can learn and the University's programs are intended to provide

educational opportunities to students as individuals, not by virtue of their membership within a particular demographic category.

- **Given the vast diversity that exists among SUNY campuses—reflecting their unique missions and constituent groups—the public dissemination of assessment data for accountability purposes should take place only through aggregate reporting for SUNY as a whole, or perhaps also by sector (University centers, colleges, community colleges).** Campus-specific assessment data should be used primarily for confidential in-house discussions as part of the ongoing improvement process, whether between faculty and administrators on a particular campus or between campus representatives and System Administration officials.

Additionally, with respect to University-wide assessment:

- **System Administration should not report any data gathered through University-wide assessment for accountability purposes until adequate reliability and validity estimates of the measures being used are demonstrated.**

- **Individual campuses should have the opportunity to review data from the University-wide assessment process and comment upon them, providing a context for the interpretation of the results.** This commentary should be stored as inextricable data and considered as part of the whole picture, for analytical purposes. Such interpretation becomes especially critical when comparing changes in scores from one assessment cycle to the next, since institutional conditions may change dramatically across time. To illustrate, over a six-year period an individual campus may show a significant decline in mathematics scores; this change may reflect a decline in programmatic or instructional quality or it may reflect other, possibly demographic, factors.

*Closing the Loop*

System Administration should attempt to coordinate information gathered through University-wide assessment in such a way that it will feed back into the teaching and learning process. As suggested earlier, System Administration could provide an invaluable service to campuses by following campus-based efforts and organizing assessment data according to different pedagogical approaches (e.g., relating a new computer-based approach to teaching the mathematics competency to more traditional instruction). Such an effort would have to be University-wide, since System Administration would be the only locus where this information is housed. In addition, meaningful analysis of instructional approaches can only be accomplished through the use of the same learning outcomes measures.

► The Task Force believes that System Administration should provide a highly visible forum for highlighting the various campus-based assessment approaches so that communication across campuses is enhanced and faculty from different institutions can learn from each other. For example, an annual "Best Practices" conference could be held, focusing on different approaches to teaching a particular set of learning outcomes, and a SUNY website devoted to assessment could be established. These strategies illustrate how University-wide assessment can be used in the best possible way, engaging faculty in the teaching and learning processes. In addition, this approach would provide a showcase for the many excellent faculty members across the University who are constantly working to maintain and improve excellence.

***Campus Role and Responsibilities***

In order for the assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education to have a meaningful and enduring impact, it must be incorporated into the larger context of the ongoing evaluation of the institution and its majors. All activities, including assessment, must be congruent with the mission of each institution and the diversity of its program goals. In addition to the courses and other educational experiences comprising the curriculum of a program, student learning outcomes are affected by every activity from the initial contacts with admissions until the final placements of the students. Faculty, students, professional staff, and administrators share the responsibility for the success and improvement of student learning outcomes. Consequently, each campus is responsible for overseeing the process through which the assessment of academic major programs takes place, following existing curriculum and governance procedures.

Further, it is important to note that the assessment of student learning outcomes comprises only a part of the comprehensive program review process academic programs should undergo on a regular basis in order to stay current and provide the best possible education to their majors. The *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs*[7] continues to be a good working document accepted by the faculty for guiding program review. It is the Task Force's position, therefore, that recommendations included in the present section for assessing student learning outcomes should be carried out within the broader framework of the University Faculty Senate's guidelines.

► The Task Force recommends that assessment plans for academic majors include the following format:

- Delineation of the programmatic goals and objectives for the Major, with an emphasis on the learning outcomes students should demonstrate as they progress through the program to completion;
- Description of the programmatic activities that are intended to accomplish these goals and objectives;
- Identification of the assessment criteria to be utilized in determining whether or not students are meeting the program's goals and objectives; and,
- Description of the process to be used in assessing the program, making changes, if suggested, based on assessment findings, and disseminating assessment results to appropriate constituencies.

These actions are generally recognized in the assessment literature as basic components of program assessment. In addition, they are consistent with the Middle States Association's *Framework for Outcomes Assessment* (1996), which will enable programs to use them not only for campus-based assessment but also to help fulfill reaccreditation requirements.

***Role of Faculty and Campus Support Structure***

The actual task of developing and implementing assessment of academic programs should fall to the faculty members who teach in the program. It is necessary, however, for campuses to have a structure in place for following the implementation of program assessment and for providing support and feedback to programs regarding the development of their assessment plans and their implementation. The specific form this structure takes is up to individual campuses. For example, campuses that have assessment

[7] Approved by the University Faculty Senate in 1983 and reissued in 1990. A further revision is expected.

offices might charge these offices with reviewing department assessment plans, providing feedback, and tracking the frequency with which departments undergo assessment. Other campuses might assign these same responsibilities to a campus-wide assessment committee or to an existing standing academic policies and procedures committee. At the minimum, however, department assessment plans should be reviewed and approved by department chairpersons, appropriate deans, and the campus's chief academic officer.

***Implementation of Program Assessment***[8]

Campuses should initially evaluate the extent to which assessment of academic programs is taking place and whether or not programs are following similar guidelines and using similar formats in implementing their assessment plans.

► The Task Force recommends that each campus adopt its own uniform guidelines and formats in order to facilitate the review process. This would enhance communication among programs about assessment as they develop and implement their plans. To the greatest extent possible, faculty should be intimately involved in the development of assessment plan criteria as well as the procedures to be used in reviewing and providing feedback on department plans. Similarly, campus governance and curriculum groups should be involved as appropriate.

There are two discrete stages in the assessment plan process, as described below:

Initial Approval Process

Using campus-determined procedures, initial assessment plans for academic programs should be reviewed and approved, ultimately by the campus's chief academic officer. A fundamental evaluative criterion at this stage should be the extent to which programs demonstrate congruence between their assessment plan and campus guidelines. If these guidelines follow the general outline provided above, other, more specific, criteria might include:

- Clearly-stated goals and objectives for the Major, including for the assessment of the learning outcomes to be demonstrated by students as they progress through the program to completion;
- The courses and activities in the program that relate to, and are likely to result in, the achievement of the program's goals and objectives;
- Assessment measures and criteria to be utilized in determining the degree to which students are achieving programmatic goals and objectives; and
- Procedures that exist for revising the program, should that be suggested by assessment results.

The assessment plan should also include the time line the program intends to follow in implementing and completing its assessment plan.

Ongoing Review

Following the initial review, academic departments should undergo ongoing review of their major. In conducting these reviews, appropriate groups and individuals should continue to apply the criteria utilized in the initial process. An additional criterion at this stage should be the extent to which departments demonstrate they are using assessment results to improve their programs.

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[8] It is recognized that some campuses are already far along in the program assessment process, in which case the recommended procedures may not be appropriate.

- ▶ The Task Force believes it is appropriate that campuses and individual programs have considerable latitude in the way they approach and structure their assessment programs for academic majors, depending to some extent on their size, number of majors, and other relevant factors.[9] For instance, large programs may decide to assess random samples of students, while small programs may include all majors in their assessment. There are requirements that all programs should meet, however, in carrying out their assessment plan:

- Programs should complete one cycle of assessment every five to seven years, corresponding to the University Faculty Senate guidelines for program review.[10] If a review of the major has not been done within the past decade, it should occur early in this cycle.
- Programs should include measures of student learning outcomes in their assessment plans;
- Programs should seek review of their final assessment report by an external review team, including a campus visit and report to the chief academic officer;[11] and,
- Programs should include in their plans some strategy for measuring change in students' knowledge and skills over time, specific to designated learning outcomes.

Campuses may very well—and, in fact, would be wise to—require academic programs to provide some intermittent reports of assessment activity and findings, perhaps in their annual report, with an emphasis on how programs are using findings to improve themselves. In this way, institutions can be assured that assessment is in fact an ongoing activity across programs. Such requirements, however, should be up to the discretion of individual campuses.

*Resource Implications*

The strain of implementing comprehensive assessment of all academic programs on a campus's resources can be minimized to some extent through the following strategies:

Using Course-Embedded Measures

As much as possible, academic programs should rely on course-embedded measures, such as the collection of portfolios that students already prepare for particular courses or across courses, capstone courses, and unique assignments that are limited to one or two courses (e.g., oral presentations). Although there will be some initial workload issues associated with the development of course-embedded measures, they could eventually become such an integral part of courses that workload issues should cease to be a problem. Course-embedded measures would also likely be viewed more positively by students since they would not be seen as add-on activities outside of the normal course structure and, since such measures are part of the course structure, student motivation is less of an issue.

Use of Readily-Available Institutional Data

In addition to learning outcomes, academic programs should also incorporate into their assessment plans information that is already routinely produced by existing offices: examples include application, admissions, and yield data for specific programs; alumni surveys; and GPA, retention, and attrition statistics for programs.

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[9] This process could be significantly modified for professional programs that have rigorous outside accreditation requirements.
[10] The University Faculty Senate guidelines call for program review every five years, but experience suggests a more flexible five to seven year cycle.
[11] This could become a part of a more comprehensive, cyclical departmental or school review.

Linking Assessment Plan Implementation to Other External Reviews

In developing a schedule for academic program assessment, campuses should make every effort to synchronize this schedule with reaccreditation reviews by Middle States and other, discipline-specific agencies (e.g., NCATE, SED), and other external reviews. Further, when feasible, departments may use information obtained from reaccreditation to "inform" the assessment process, or vice versa. It is not desirable, however, to allow the accreditation and assessment processes to substitute for each other, since this approach might create the potential for departments to ignore assessment until their next accreditation cycle. More important, the various accrediting bodies may have different expectations for assessment, resulting in uneven quality across departments in the implementation of assessment programs.

Although these strategies can reduce assessment costs, there is no question that campuses must be prepared to invest significant resources in the implementation of an effective assessment program. Depending upon the status of assessment on a particular campus, it may be necessary to use funds initially for the purpose of educating faculty about assessment, by bringing external consultants to campus, purchasing basic informational texts about assessment, and sending faculty to assessment conferences. Other likely expenses will be related to developing or purchasing appropriate assessment instruments and providing faculty with extra service stipends or release time for analyzing assessment data or evaluating different assessment measures such as portfolios. Most significant are the costs that will result from using external reviewers for each program: By establishing a "staggered" assessment schedule, campuses can ensure that only 1/7 to 1/5 of their academic majors are completing an assessment round each year, but the use of external reviewers will still constitute a significant expense.

Institutions should do all they can to encourage assessment activity, perhaps through the administration of an incentive grant program to departments. Outstanding campus-based assessment initiatives could be recognized in Performance Funding at the System level. Campuses must also be willing to make this investment since faculty will not otherwise perceive assessment as valued by the institution and they will not make the necessary commitment to implementing an assessment program.

*Reporting Format and Utilization of Assessment Findings by Institutions*

Individual programs should determine how to disseminate the results of their assessment program to their own constituents. For example, a department may choose to highlight assessment findings in brochures designed to recruit students or in newsletters to alumni. Or, programs may present the results of an assessment round at a professional, discipline-specific conference, tying the findings to program improvement.

Upon completion of an assessment round, departments should submit a report describing the results of their assessment program to their dean, chief academic officer, and others—depending on the campus's particular assessment review structure. This report should include information on the following:

- The assessment measures and criteria used in determining the degree to which students are meeting the program's goals and objectives;
- The sampling procedures used to choose students who provided data for the assessment as well as a description of the sample itself;
- A detailed summary of the results of the assessment;
- A discussion of programmatic changes to be considered for possible implementation as a result of the assessment findings; and,
- The report of the external review team.

This report should be included with materials submitted when significant changes require Program Review by System Administration.

- ▶ The Task Force believes that individual institutions should have autonomy in the dissemination and use of the findings resulting from the assessment of their academic majors. The following guidelines are recommended:

    - Institutions that choose to disseminate assessment findings publicly should do so in aggregate fashion (for the institution as a whole) or in a way that is consistent with its internal organization (i.e., by college or school). Institutions should not publish or distribute externally assessment data for individual programs.
    - Internal reports of assessment findings for all academic programs might be useful, but these reports should be published without revealing the identity of specific departments. In this way, programs can compare themselves with other programs without risk of being embarrassed in case their assessment findings are relatively less positive.
    - Any discussions of assessment data should take place in confidential sessions between the institution's academic leadership and the department, as part of the ongoing program improvement process.
    - Each year the Chief Academic Officer at each institution should submit a report to the Office of the Provost at System Administration providing a summary of the academic programs that underwent review during that year and the major findings, as well as a listing of programs scheduled for review during the next academic year.

*System Administration Role and Responsibilities*

Given the sheer number of academic programs across the University, as well as the diversity of programs even within a specific discipline, the principal role for System Administration should be to receive and review the reports of assessment activities from each campus to ensure that assessment of academic programs is taking place as scheduled. In addition, System Administration will necessarily become involved when assessment findings result in programmatic changes requiring System approval.

The costs that will be incurred by campuses in implementing an assessment program for academic majors—resulting in particular from the mandate that external reviewers be used—will certainly require the University to commit significant resources to campuses in order to support assessment activities.

Finally, last year the Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Committee of the University Faculty Senate of the State University of New York finished an extensive revision of the *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs* (1983, reissued 1990). However, in response to the Assessment Initiative Interim Report of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, the Undergraduate Committee sought and received approval from the University Faculty Senate Executive Committee to further review and revise the Guide in light of the recommendations of the Assessment Interim Report while providing continuity with past practices. It is unclear whether the existing procedures are systematically followed by campuses or tracked by System Administration.

- ▶ The Task Force recommends that System Administration should renew its efforts to track these assessment and program review efforts.

## Intellectual Growth

Measuring an individual's intellectual growth presents a very complex set of issues requiring sophisticated solutions. The complexity of these issues and the relationship between this growth and the course of studies that a student pursues at the college level dictate that the measurement of this growth is best accomplished at the campus level, possibly at the program level.

Several conceptual models of intellectual growth have been articulated during Task Force deliberations. One is that intellectual growth is an additive or multiplicative product of knowledge growth in General Education and the Major, in addition to other academic, co-curricular, and social experiences. Another is that intellectual growth represents something independent of knowledge, and includes qualities such as intellectual curiosity, appreciation of the arts and culture, and a desire for civic engagement. An additional co-archetype might be the so-called "vectors" of development that could form an integral element set of either model.

In both of these models, intellectual growth takes place throughout a student's course of study and co-curricular activities; it also depends upon students' motivational level and the personal goals they set for themselves. Any measure of intellectual growth should, therefore, include affective measures such as motivational level and goal-setting. It would be ideal to administer these measures when students first enter an institution as part of a protocol for aggregating input variables. and periodically during the course of their studies: for example, students could provide useful information through questions such as: "Compared to when you first entered this program/institution:"

- ✓ Has there been a change in your aspirations?
- ✓ What do you expect to major in?
- ✓ How confident are you about your skills?
- ✓ How well prepared do you feel to [list, . . .]?
- ✓ What books have you read?
- ✓ What ten adjectives describe you?

A concern for students' intellectual growth should be part of all academic program reviews, and the expected outcomes in the Major should be designed in order to demonstrate important relationships between students' general intellectual attainments and those associated with core studies in the discipline.

The Task Force believes that a meaningful measure of SUNY students' intellectual growth can and should be made, but that simple "before and after" testing of limited scope cannot tap this construct adequately.

- ▶ The Task Force recommends that work on intellectual growth—including its definition, operationalization, measurement, analysis, and reporting—resume once the implementation of campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major—and the design and implementation of University-wide assessment of General Education—are underway. For the moment, campuses are encouraged to develop procedures—perhaps as part of their assessment of general education and the major—for demonstrating how their academic programs contribute to students' intellectual growth and development.

After the SUNY Assessment Initiative is underway, a group with expertise in academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional research—and including student representation—should be established to determine the most effective way of measuring this fundamentally important aspect of students' time in the University. In addition, the Task Force recognizes that a major role of the community colleges is to add significantly to the intellectual growth of students. Therefore, it recommends that any ties that may eventually be made between measurable intellectual growth and performance funding be done in such a way as to fully capture the value added by community colleges.

## MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force has included in this report numerous proposals for future actions in assessing General Education and the Major, along with principles that should guide these actions. The following is a summary of the Task Force's major recommendations for actualizing the SUNY Assessment Initiative. These recommendations are included and explained in greater detail in the text of this report.

**General**

- The SUNY Assessment Initiative should place foremost emphasis on assessment as a means of improving academic programs, pedagogy, and student learning.
- The SUNY Assessment Initiative must respect the diversity that exists among SUNY institutions, especially their unique missions.
- All activities carried out as a part of the SUNY Assessment Initiative should incorporate and respect existing governance and curriculum structures and processes.
- The SUNY Assessment Initiative should consist of both campus-based and University-wide strategies, with campus-based assessment focused primarily on program improvement and University-wide assessment used primarily to serve accountability and advocacy functions.

**Resources and Support**

- SUNY System Administration should make a commitment to providing adequate resources on a sustained basis so that campuses are able to develop and implement effective modes of assessment of student learning outcomes.
- Individual campuses should support assessment efforts by making assessment-related funding needs a priority in their budgets.
- SUNY System Administration should assume responsibility for coordinating and facilitating assessment efforts across its 64 campuses.
- SUNY System Administration should provide multiple forums for the purpose of highlighting and publicizing best assessment practices across the 64 campuses.
- SUNY System Administration should commit itself to the provision of databases that are reliable, coordinated, and available to appropriate persons.

**General Education**

Campus-Based

- Campus-based assessment plans of General Education should be developed and implemented primarily by faculty members who teach in the program, with the assistance of professional staff when appropriate and students, and submitted to and approved by the campus's Faculty Senate or Council.
- Campus General Education assessment plans should be approved and reviewed regularly by a group consisting of University faculty, campus chief academic officers, and representatives from System Administration. This General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group should be formed jointly by University Faculty Senate and Community College Faculty Council leadership and System Administration, and should include individuals who are knowledgeable about assessment.
- Campuses should use a standardized format, developed jointly by the campuses and System Administration, in reporting the results of their General Education assessment program to System Administration. Reported results should indicate the percentage of students exceeding, meeting, approaching, and not meeting the delineated learning outcomes.

University-Wide

- University-wide assessment should periodically assess, using common measures, a representative sample of students from across SUNY in order to gauge students' attainment in the learning outcomes of the *Implementation Guidelines* in Mathematics, Basic Communication, Critical Thinking (Reasoning), Information Management, and the understanding of the methods scientists and social scientists use to explore phenomena.
- A University-wide Assessment Implementation Working Group, comprised of faculty and students from across SUNY, with representatives from System Administration, should be formed to develop the actual assessment instrument(s) to be used, as well as the procedures to be followed.
- University-wide assessment should utilize a variety of evaluation approaches, all of which are demonstrated to be valid and reliable.
- Campuses should have sufficient time to develop and implement their own assessment programs before implementation of University-wide assessment proceeds.

**The Major**

- Campuses and programs should have maximum autonomy in the development of assessment plans for academic majors, and should include the input of faculty, professional staff, and students.
- Assessment of academic programs should take place every five to seven years, should incorporate external review whenever feasible, and should include delineation of the programmatic goals and objectives for the major with an emphasis on the programmatic activities that are intended to accomplish these goals and objectives and the learning outcomes students should demonstrate upon completing the program, as well as a strategy for measuring change in students' knowledge and skills over time.
- Academic programs should use a standardized format and consistent procedures developed by their campus in developing and implementing their assessment plans, although latitude should be granted for programs also undergoing accreditation or certification.
- Each year institutions should submit a report to System Administration providing a summary of the academic programs that underwent review during that year and the major findings, as well as a listing of programs scheduled for review during the next academic year.
- Recommendations for assessing student learning outcomes in the Major should be carried out within the broader framework of the University Faculty Senate's *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs*.
- System Administration should renew its efforts to track campus-based assessment and program review efforts.

**Utilization and Reporting of Assessment Results**

- System Administration should only report data gathered through University-wide assessment for accountability purposes after adequate reliability and validity estimates of the measures being used are demonstrated.
- Stringent guidelines should be developed and adhered to in order to ensure that confidentiality of assessment data is maintained.
- Assessment results should never be used to punish, publicly compare, or embarrass students, faculty, courses, programs, departments, or institutions either individually or collectively, or to make public comparisons among groups of students based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other demographic factors.
- System Administration should publicly disseminate assessment data only through aggregate reporting for SUNY as a whole, or by sector.
- While individual programs are free to use their own assessment results in ways they see fit, individual campuses should publicly disseminate assessment data only through aggregate reporting for the institution as a whole, or by school or college.

**Incentives**

- System Administration should support State-operated/funded institutions with resources for campus-based assessment through Performance Funding, based upon a determination of the extent to which campuses have implemented their assessment plans for General Education and the Major. An alternative incentive process will need to be established for community colleges.
- Individual campuses should reward academic programs for assessment activities through their budgeting process to the greatest extent possible and recognize the assessment-related efforts of faculty and professional staff through appropriate personnel processes and incentives.

## APPENDIX A

### FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION ON THE SUNY ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

The Faculty Senate urges the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes to embrace the following principles of undergraduate assessment for the SUNY System as it completes its work and formulates its recommendations.

Any approach to the assessment of undergraduate education for the State University of New York, the largest and most diverse system of higher education in the world, must be comprehensive, comprehensible, complex, cost effective, collegial, constructive, and primarily campus based.

1. Comprehensive. Campus plans should assess institutional and student performance in the following areas of undergraduate education: communication and computation; general education, academic majors, and student social and personal development.
2. Comprehensible. Campus plans and assessment reports should be clear and comprehensible to internal and external constituents and publics. Annual assessment reports should indicate the current level of institutional and student performance in the areas outlined in #1 as compared with the levels recorded in previous reports.
3. Complex. The plans should use multiple approaches to assessment and multiple indicators of effectiveness that reflect the complexity of the goals of higher education and the diversity of SUNY campuses.
4. Cost Effective. The plans should be cost effective and use, where appropriate, existing databases and evaluation processes and sampling techniques.
5. Collegial. Campus plans should incorporate active faculty and student participation in the development and implementation of assessment programs.
6. Constructive. Assessment should be used not to compare or grade campuses or students but to demonstrate current levels of achievement and to improve future performance. The appropriate comparison is not with other institutions but with campus past performance. The goal of assessment for students and institutions is to help them become the best they are capable of being.
7. Campus based. Development and implementation of assessment plans that suit the needs of each of the state-operated campuses and community colleges of SUNY require that assessment be primarily campus based.

Guidelines for Assessment

1. Campus plans for evaluating undergraduate education should reflect the mission of each institution and the diversity of its program goals. Given the complexity of the goals of undergraduate education, campuses should use multiple indicators of student achievement. Assessment reports should indicate both the absolute levels of performance and the relative trends over time.
2. Campus plans, where possible and appropriate, should use data currently collected and evaluation programs already in place. For example, information on admissions, retention, and completion rates; results from surveys of students, alumni and employers; and findings of accreditation reports for the institution or degree programs as well as of program reviews should constitute critical components in assessment efforts.
3. Campus plans may include nationally available instruments or campus designed measures or a combination of the two approaches to assessment. The choice of instruments or measures will vary depending on the particular missions, goals, and programs of individual campuses.
4. Campus plans should include assessment of student performance and satisfaction at appropriate intervals during college and of alumni after graduation.
5. Campus plans should include assessment of student performance in computation and communication skills, general education, and academic major, and personal and social growth.

6. Campuses should consider costs as well as impact on students and faculty in developing their assessment plans. It may be appropriate to use sampling procedures rather than measuring the performance of every student. In addition, every program need not be assessed each year but only on a regular schedule.
7. Faculty and students should participate actively in the development of assessment plans, in their implementation, and in the continuing efforts to use assessment to improve the institutional and student performance.
8. Campus plans should provide for periodic review on campus to ensure that the assessment procedures are academically sound, reflect the institutional mission and program goals, and encourage program improvement.
9. Campus plans should provide for annual assessment reports on the level of institutional performance and the trends over time, especially in relation to institutional goals. Since the most important purpose of assessment is to improve performance (both institutional and student performance), these reports should include changes in programs and activities that resulted from problems or possibilities identified in prior reports.
10. Once the campus plans are fully developed, annual reports should be submitted to the Provost of SUNY by with copies to the University Faculty Senate.

University-wide Assessment

1. SUNY University-wide assessment is governed by the assumption that academic assessment is primarily a campus-based responsibility of the faculty as they conduct the educational programs of their institutions and participate significantly in the initiation, development and implementation of those educational programs.
2. University-wide assessment should be designed to support and complement written campus assessment plans approved by the faculty, to ensure that those plans represent best practices in assessment.
3. Comprehensive assessment of general education and the majors should be conducted by the campuses and include, but not be limited to, those other review activities associated with general and specialized accreditation, such as those conducted by Middle States, SED and professional area accrediting bodies.
4. A paramount responsibility for System Administration is to work assiduously with the campuses and the Trustees to guarantee that assessment efforts at the campus level receive generous resources, staff assistance and funding. To that end an Office of Assessment Support should be established for that purpose and new resources specifically dedicated to the improving assessment at the campuses should be provided.

Passed unanimously.

## APPENDIX B

### ESTIMATE OF REQUIRED RESOURCES

*Campus-based Assessment*

In addition to resources already allocated to assessment to satisfy Middle States and specialized accreditation, campuses will need significant additional resources on a sustained basis with which to fully implement and support rigorous and comprehensive campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major. These resources will be required in Institutional Research, faculty release time, pay for evaluators (i.e. of writing assignments), travel to conferences, purchase of research materials and possibly standardized tests, surveys, etc., and for the expenses involved with external review.

Based on initial discussions within the Task Force and with some Chief Academic and Institutional Research officers, the following guidelines are suggested:

Minima:

Campus with

| | |
|---|---|
| less than 2,000 AAFTE | $30,000-$40,000 |
| 2,000 – 4,999 AAFTE: | $40,000-$50,000 |
| 5,000 – 9,999 AAFTE: | $10 per undergraduate AAFTE |
| 10,000 and more AAFTE: | $100,000 + $8 per undergraduate AAFTE > 10,000 |

For the SUNY System as a whole, the estimated need for additional resources to implement campus-based assessment is approximately $3.7M. This support could be distributed in a two-step process, with seed money in the first year (2001-02) and the balance in the second year (2002-03), upon full implementation of the campus plan. Some general guidelines should be established re the use of these resources.

*University-wide assessment*

To be determined.

## APPENDIX C

### RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The Task Force recommends that the planning process for assessment begin immediately once the Provost puts forward his plans for the SUNY Assessment Initiative. The shared consensus of the Provost's Advisory Council on General Education (PACGE) and the Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes is that the implementation schedule for the assessment of General Education be such so as to achieve full implementation by academic year 2002-03, the junior year of the first cohort that is required to take the new SUNY General Education curriculum.

| | |
|---|---|
| May 2000 | Task Force Report to Provost, to be shared with the University community, inviting feedback and comments by early Fall. |
| November 2000 | Provost puts forward plans for the SUNY Assessment Initiative. |

General Education

Campus-based assessment

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|---|---|
| November 2000 | GEAR group formed jointly by University Faculty Senate and Community College Faculty Council leadership and System Administration.[12] At this stage, the GEAR group will be available to help campuses as they begin to develop their assessment plans, communicating early on with them about what is expected, perhaps even entering into dialogue. This would provide plenty of lead-time and establish a good working relationship. This help could also include putting together a handbook for campuses on how to build a campus plan, and holding a workshop/symposium in Spring 2001 on campus-based assessment of General Education. |
| Spring 2001 | Workshop/symposium[13] on campus-based assessment, to help campuses as they begin to develop their assessment plans. Working plan: Two representatives from each campus: the person who will have responsibility for campus-based assessment of General Education and the person who will have the operational responsibility for implementing assessment. The purpose of the conference is to jump-start the campus process by establishing target dates, identifying the people responsible for assessment, and providing resources on assessment. Possible conference activities: keynote address or addresses by national experts in assessment, endorsement by key SUNY leaders (University Senate, campus leadership), best practices, Q & A, workshops on designing instruments, procedures, etc. Suggested format: from noon on Day 1 till noon on Day 2, allowing first morning and second afternoon for travel; full sessions in the afternoon and evening of the first day and the morning of second day. Workshop/Symposium costs and expenses for two campus representatives to be paid for with seed money from System Administration. (Campuses may wish to send other representatives at their own expense.) |
| February 2002 | Having been approved by the campus's Faculty Senate or Faculty Council, campus-based assessment plans for General Education are submitted to GEAR for approval by the end of May 2002. |
| AY 2002-03 | Full implementation of campus-based assessment of General Education begins. |

[12] Initially, for a short period, the GEAR group may be formed from, or include, volunteers from the Task Force to get it up and running. The Task Force recommends some overlap in membership between the Task Force and the GEAR group.
[13] Alternatively, several regional workshops could be held.

| | |
|---|---|
| June 2003 | Chief Academic Officers submit initial annual report on campus-based assessment of General Education to the Office of the Provost at System Administration. |
| Fall 2003 | First annual SUNY "Best Practices" conference held, focusing on different approaches to teaching a particular set of learning outcomes. SUNY website devoted to assessment established. An important aspect of this conference should be a dialogue among campuses re how they are spending their assessment resources. |
| December 2003 | Ongoing (biennial, staggered) review of campus-based plans for General Education begins. |

University-wide assessment

| | |
|---|---|
| TBD | A working group of faculty formed from across SUNY (including representatives from the appropriate governance bodies) who would work collaboratively with representatives from System Administration to develop the actual assessment instrument(s) to be used, as well as the procedures to be followed. Representatives from the SUNY Learning Network should also be invited to participate, and it is likely that external consultants will be needed as well to help develop these instruments. |
| AY 2002-03[14] | Pilot implementation of University-wide assessment of General Education begins. |
| TBD | Regular implementation of University-wide assessment of General Education begins. |

The Major

| | |
|---|---|
| January 2001 | Campuses begin planning for campus-based assessment of the Major, following existing governance processes. |
| June 2001 | Chief Academic Officers submit the schedule for the five- to seven year cycle of program review to the Office of the Provost at System Administration. |
| Fall 2001 | Campus-based assessment of the Major begins. (Since this will be on a five- to seven-year cycle, it can begin with programs for which campuses have an extant process.) |
| June 2002 | Chief Academic Officers submit initial annual report on the assessment of the Major to the Office of the Provost at System Administration. |

[14] Or earlier, if possible.

## APPENDIX D

## GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

This section delineates the learning outcomes required by the SUNY General Education program.

Knowledge and Skills Areas

1. MATHEMATICS

   Students will show competence in the following quantitative reasoning skills:

   - Arithmetic;
   - Algebra;
   - Geometry;
   - Data analysis; and
   - Quantitative reasoning.

2. NATURAL SCIENCES

   Students will demonstrate:

   - Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; and
   - Application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural sciences.

3. SOCIAL SCIENCES

   Students will demonstrate:

   - Understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; and
   - Knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

4. AMERICAN HISTORY

   Students will demonstrate:

   - Knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society;
   - Knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups; and
   - Understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

5. WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization; and
- Relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

6. OTHER WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or
- The distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

7. HUMANITIES

Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.

8. THE ARTS

Students will demonstrate:

- Understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

9. FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Students will demonstrate:

- Basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; and
- Knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

10. BASIC COMMUNICATION

Students will:

- Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- Research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- Develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- Evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

Competencies

The following two competencies should be infused throughout the General Education program:

1. CRITICAL THINKING (REASONING)

   Students will:

   - Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or other's work; and
   - Develop well-reasoned arguments.

2. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

   Students will:

   - Perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
   - Understand and use basic research techniques; and
   - Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

## Appendix E

### Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

**Co-Chairs**

| | |
|---|---|
| Francis, Patricia | Executive Assistant to the President, Professor of Psychology, College at Cortland |
| Steven, Donald A. | Associate Provost, Office of Academic Affairs, System Administration |

**Members**

| | |
|---|---|
| Barker, Kenneth L. | Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Health Science Center at Syracuse |
| Canniff, James | Vice President for Academic Affairs, Suffolk County Community College |
| Feldman, Mary Jane | Director of Institutional Research, Niagara County Community College |
| Flanagan, Timothy J. | Vice President for Academic Affairs, College at Brockport |
| Flynn, Joseph | SUNY Distinguished Professor of English, President, University Faculty Senate, Alfred State College |
| Gonder, Jonathan | Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Sullivan County Community College |
| Holland, Chris | Doctoral student majoring in Higher Education Administration, University at Albany, and Vice President of the New York State Student Assembly; now member of the SUNY Board of Trustees |
| Kenney, Melissa-Jon | Student in Liberal Arts and Humanities, Dutchess Community College, and Public and Media Relations Chairperson for the Student Assembly |
| Jubenville, Robert | Professor of Life Sciences, Faculty Council, Mohawk Valley Community College |
| Lavin, Marjorie W. | former Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs, Empire State College |
| Lindner, Rosalyn | Professor of Sociology, Senior Advisor to the Provost for Assessment, Buffalo State College |
| Meacham, John A. | SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, University at Buffalo |
| Merrill, Herbert, II | Professor of Psychology, President, Faculty Council of Community Colleges, Erie Community College |
| Mukherji, Runi | Professor of Psychology, College at Old Westbury |
| Summers, Rodger | Vice President for Student Affairs, Binghamton University |
| Szelest, Bruce | Assistant Director of Institutional Research, University at Albany |
| Triggle, David J. | Vice Provost for Graduate Education, Dean of The Graduate School and SUNY Distinguished Professor, University at Buffalo |
| Winston, Mark | former Director of Assessment and Institutional Research, College at Potsdam |

**System Administration**

| | |
|---|---|
| Billie, Craig | Associate for Institutional Research, System Administration |
| Blose, Gary | Assistant Provost, Institutional Research, System Administration |
| Bringsjord, Elizabeth | Assistant Provost, Academic Affairs, System Administration |
| McBride, C. Bruce | Assistant Vice Chancellor for University Life and University Police, System Administration |

## APPENDIX F

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## APPENDIX G

## RESOURCES

***Books, Journals, and Journal Articles***


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***Web Sites***

American Association of Higher Education: http://www.aahe.org/assessment/assess_faq.htm

AAHE Assessment Forum: http://www.aahe.org/assessment/assessnw.htm

Association for Institutional Research: http://airweb2.org/links/assess.cfm

ERIC Clearinghouse: http://ericae.net/sintbod.htm

Institutional Effectiveness Associates: http://www.iea-nich.com

Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment:
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/resources.htm

Southern Illinois University: http://www.siue.edu/~deder/assess/catmain.html

Student Affairs Research and Assessment: http://www.uncc.edu/stuaffairs/sar/

***Conferences and Workshops***

*AAHE Assessment Conference* (June): http://www.aahe.org/assessment/2000/newintro.htm

*Association for Institutional Research* (May): http://airweb.org/about.html

*Institutional Effectiveness Intensive Workshop Series* (July – August): http://www.iea-nich.com/workshop.html

*International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education* (June): http://www.planning.iupui.edu

*IUPUI Assessment Institute* (November, Indianapolis): http://www.planning.iupui.edu

*NCTLA Assessment Institute* (April): http://www.ed.psu.edu/cshe/htdocs/research/NCTLA/Assessment.htm

***Videos***

*Assessment 101* (Catherine Palomba, Ball State University)

*U.S. Department of Education*
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

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